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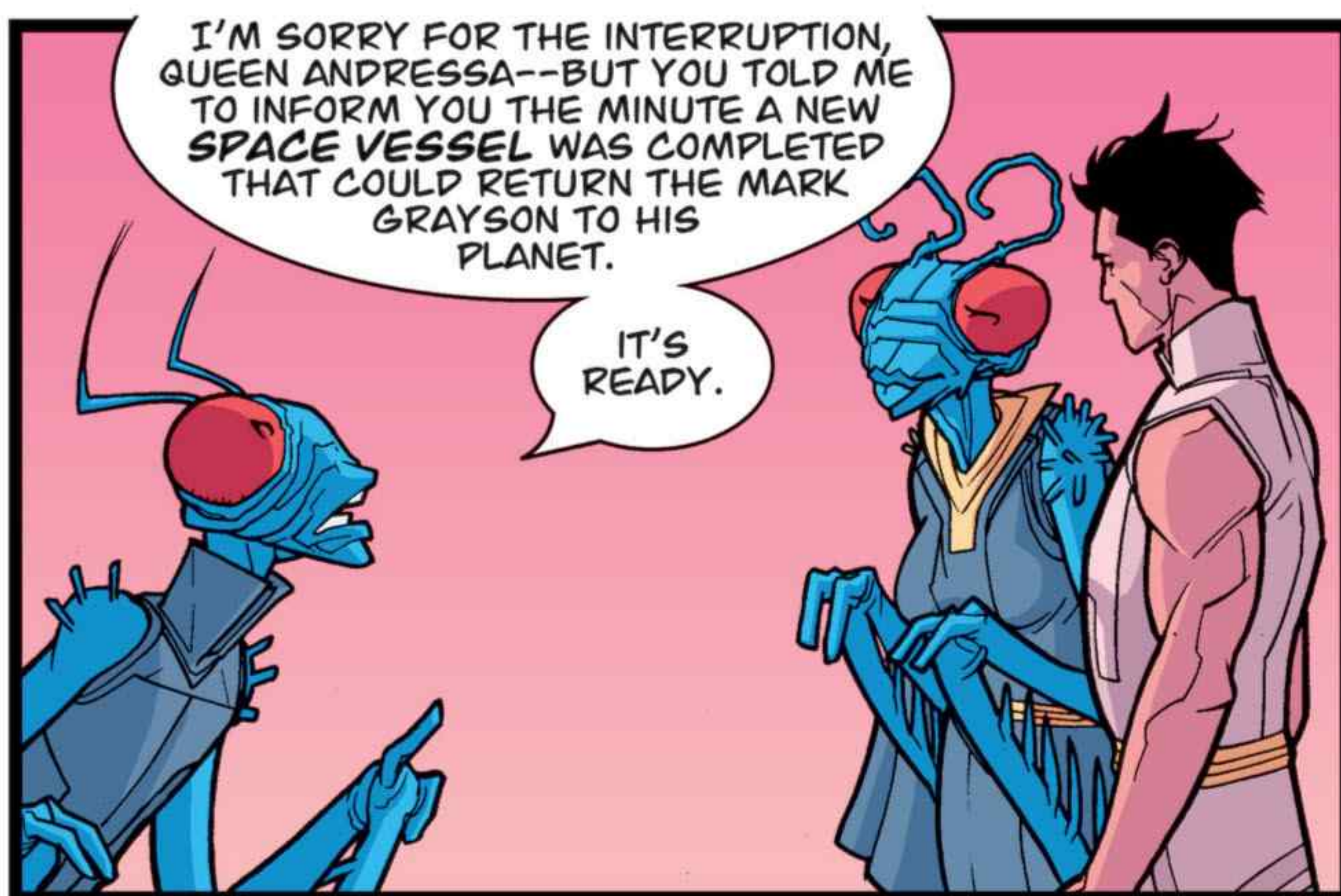
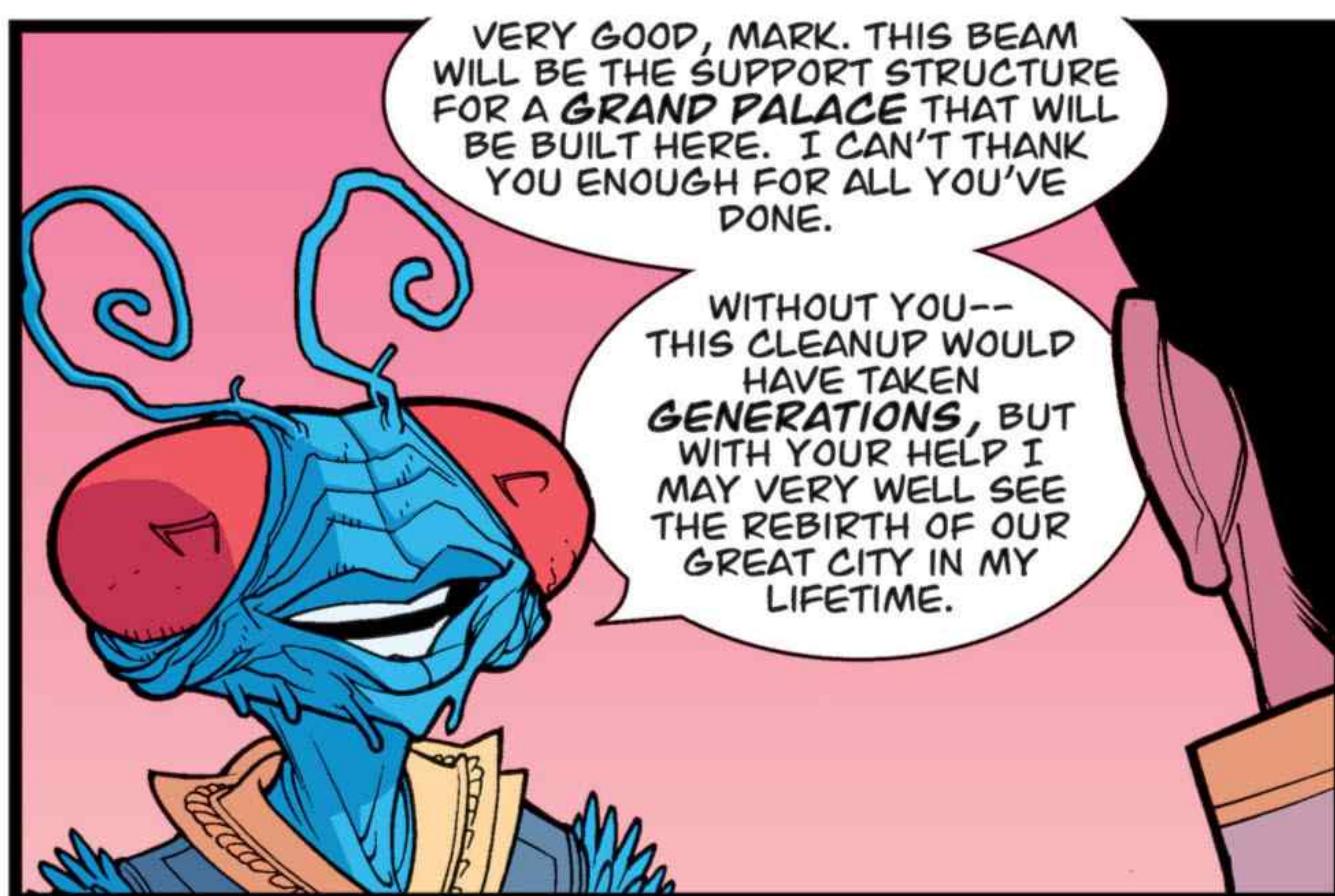
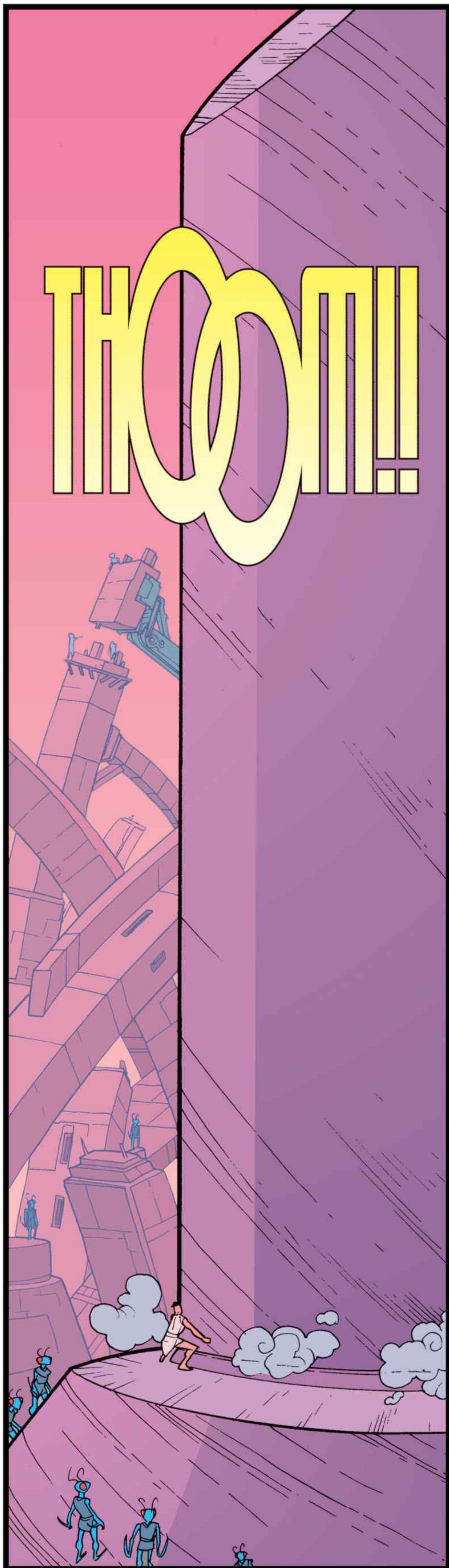
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ALMOST--

--THERE.





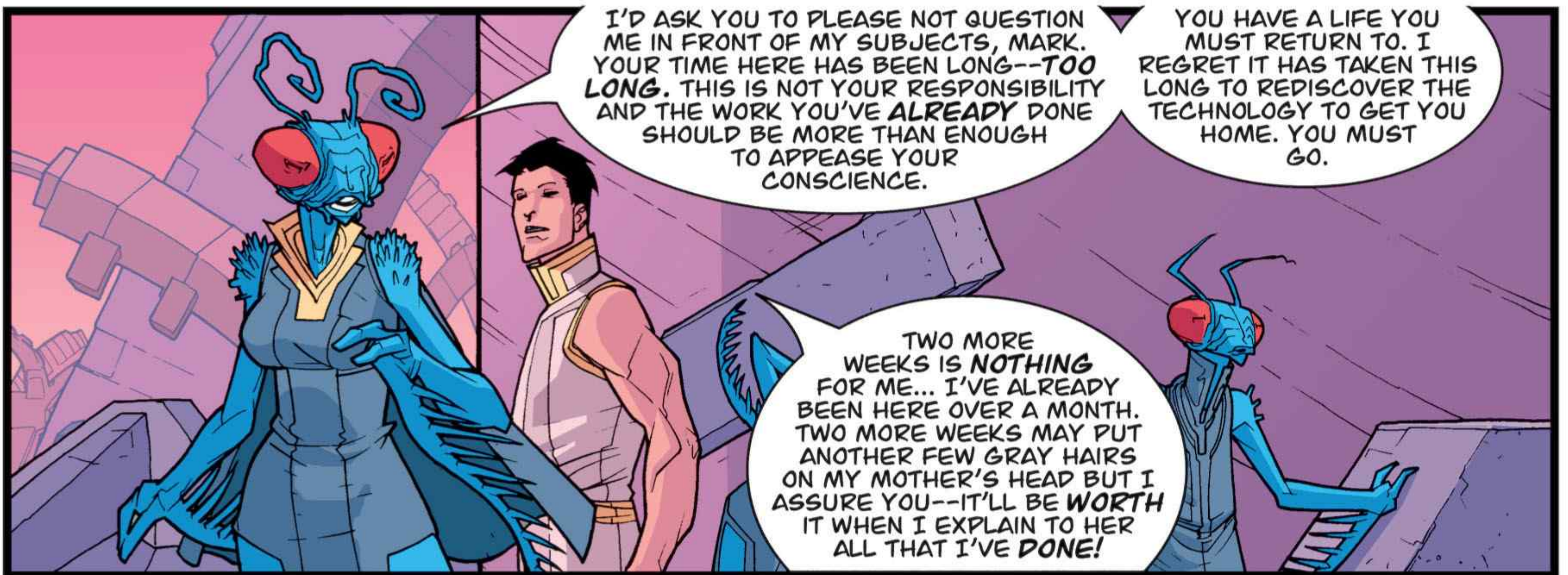
EXCELLENT. MAKE THE PREPARATIONS AT ONCE. I WANT THE SHIP PREPARED FOR LAUNCH BEFORE OUR SUNS BEGIN THEIR DECENT.

YES, QUEEN. YOUR WILL BE DONE.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! I'M NOT THROUGH YET. WITH THE HELP OF YOUR ARCHITECTS I COULD HAVE THIS ENTIRE PALACE BUILT IN ANOTHER COUPLE WEEKS.

I CAN'T LEAVE NOW-- ESPECIALLY NOT TODAY.



I'D ASK YOU TO PLEASE NOT QUESTION ME IN FRONT OF MY SUBJECTS, MARK. YOUR TIME HERE HAS BEEN LONG--**TOO LONG**. THIS IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AND THE WORK YOU'VE **ALREADY** DONE SHOULD BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO APPEASE YOUR CONSCIENCE.

YOU HAVE A LIFE YOU MUST RETURN TO. I REGRET IT HAS TAKEN THIS LONG TO REDISCOVER THE TECHNOLOGY TO GET YOU HOME. YOU MUST GO.

TWO MORE WEEKS IS **NOTHING** FOR ME... I'VE ALREADY BEEN HERE OVER A MONTH. TWO MORE WEEKS MAY PUT ANOTHER FEW GRAY HAIRS ON MY MOTHER'S HEAD BUT I ASSURE YOU--IT'LL BE **WORTH** IT WHEN I EXPLAIN TO HER ALL THAT I'VE **DONE!**



NO. YOU MUST GO, MARK. YOU MUST GO AND BE WITH YOUR PEOPLE.

IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN YOU REMIND ME OF **HIM**--OF WHAT I LOST--



YEAH, MY DAD. I--



HE HAD TO COME BACK JUST LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE ME **CARE** WHEN SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED TO HIM.



AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I STILL FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT HE'S GONE. A LIFE **ENDED** AFTER LASTING SO LONG--IT DOESN'T EVEN SEEM **REAL**.

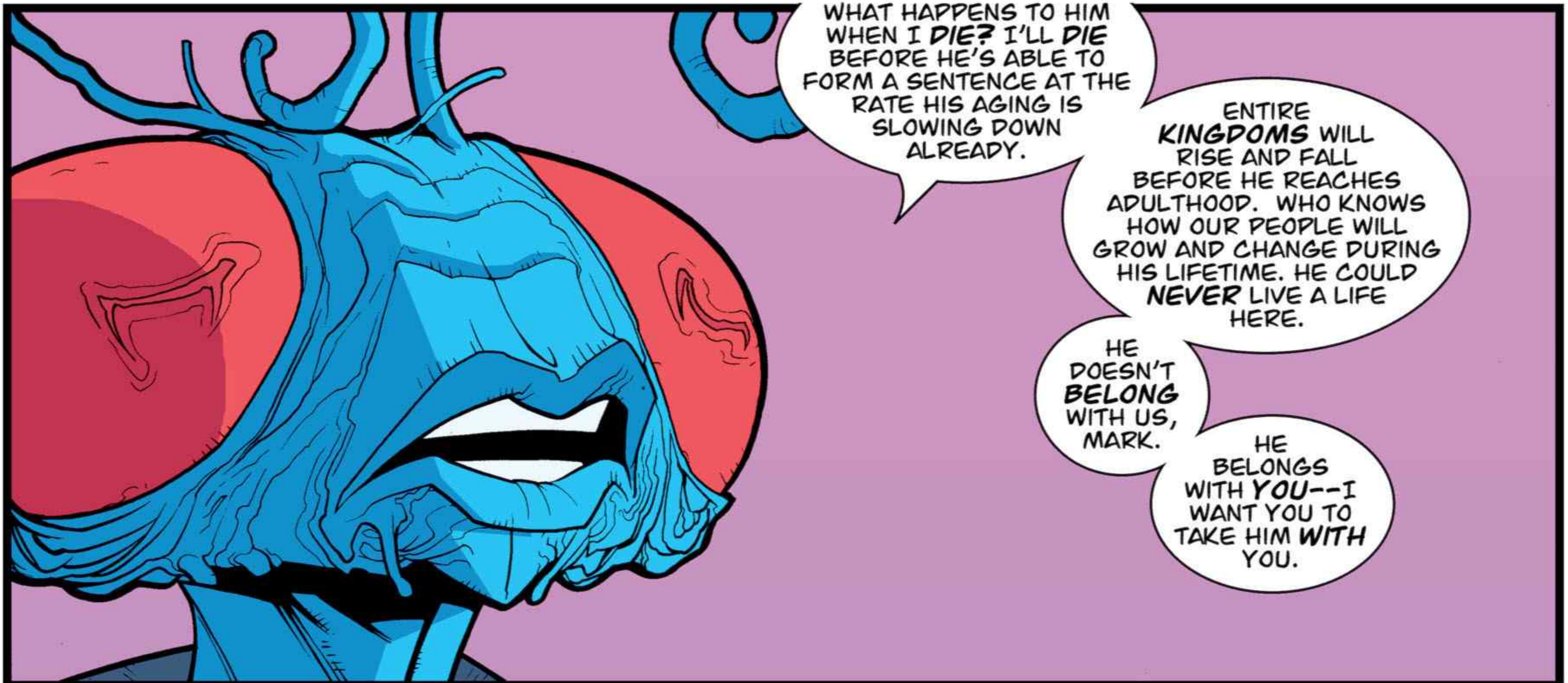
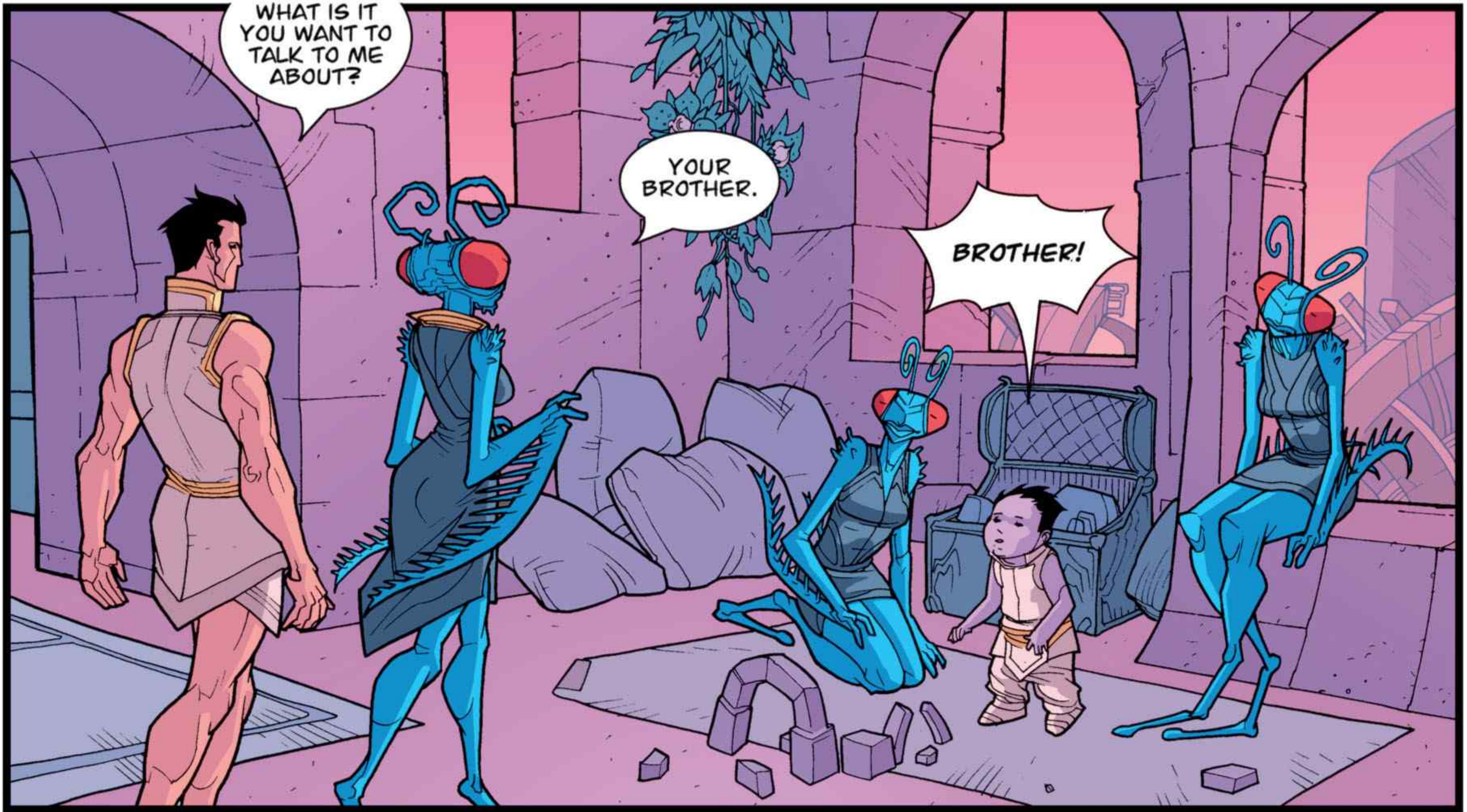


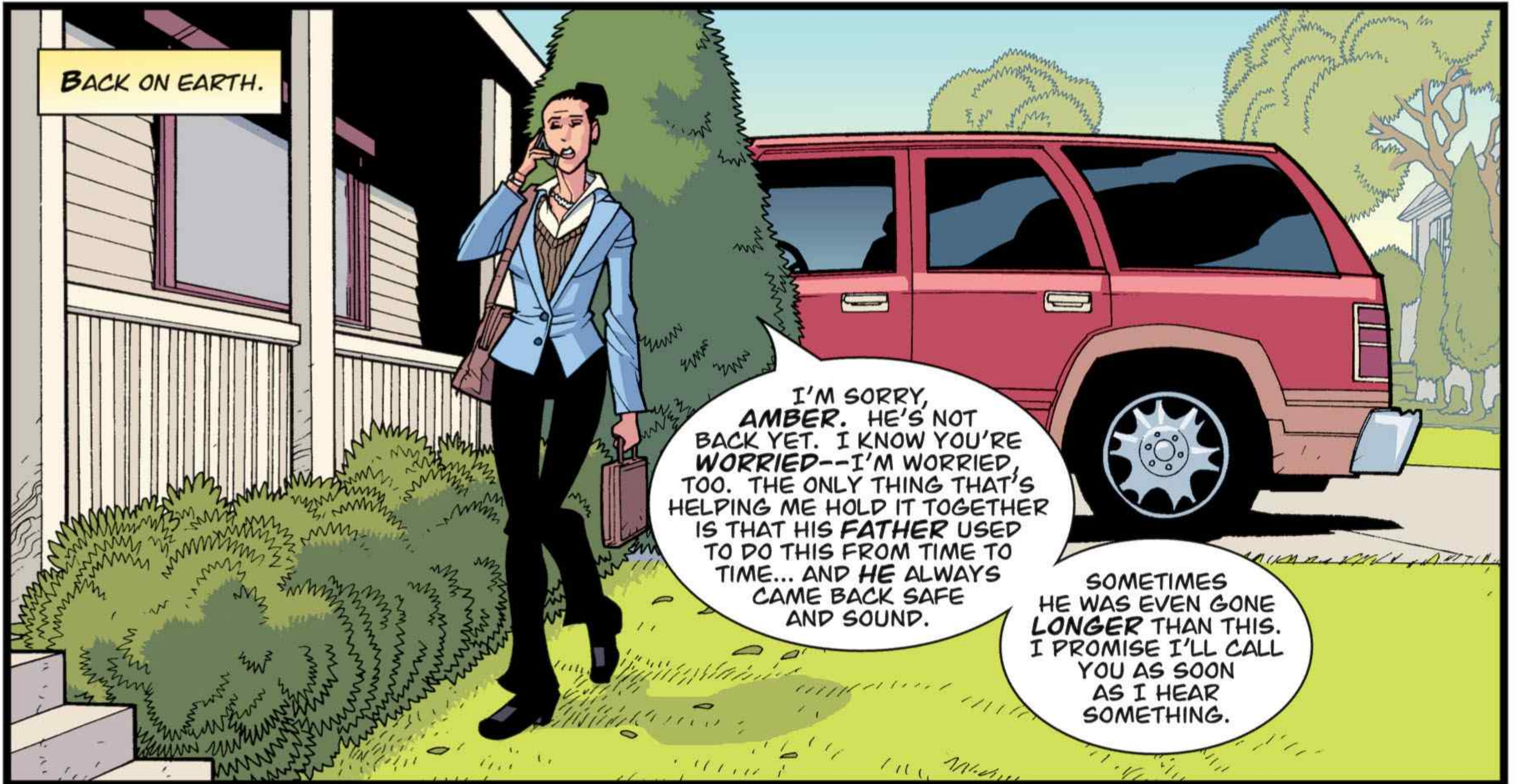
I **CAN'T** ACCEPT THAT--DON'T SAY THAT. HE'S **NOT** DEAD. HE'LL GET OUT OF IT SOME WAY.



I HOPE YOU ARE RIGHT. MORE THAN YOU COULD **EVER** KNOW.

NOW COME-- THERE IS MUCH WE MUST DISCUSS BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE.





BACK ON EARTH.

I'M SORRY, AMBER. HE'S NOT BACK YET. I KNOW YOU'RE WORRIED--I'M WORRIED, TOO. THE ONLY THING THAT'S HELPING ME HOLD IT TOGETHER IS THAT HIS FATHER USED TO DO THIS FROM TIME TO TIME... AND HE ALWAYS CAME BACK SAFE AND SOUND.

SOMETIMES HE WAS EVEN GONE LONGER THAN THIS. I PROMISE I'LL CALL YOU AS SOON AS I HEAR SOMETHING.



HUH-- WHAT WAS THAT?



OH, I'M SORRY, EVE-- I THOUGHT YOU WERE AMBER.



AREN'T YOU OVER IN... YEAH, HOW IS AFRICA? ARE YOU GETTING A LOT DONE? MAKING A DIFFERENCE?



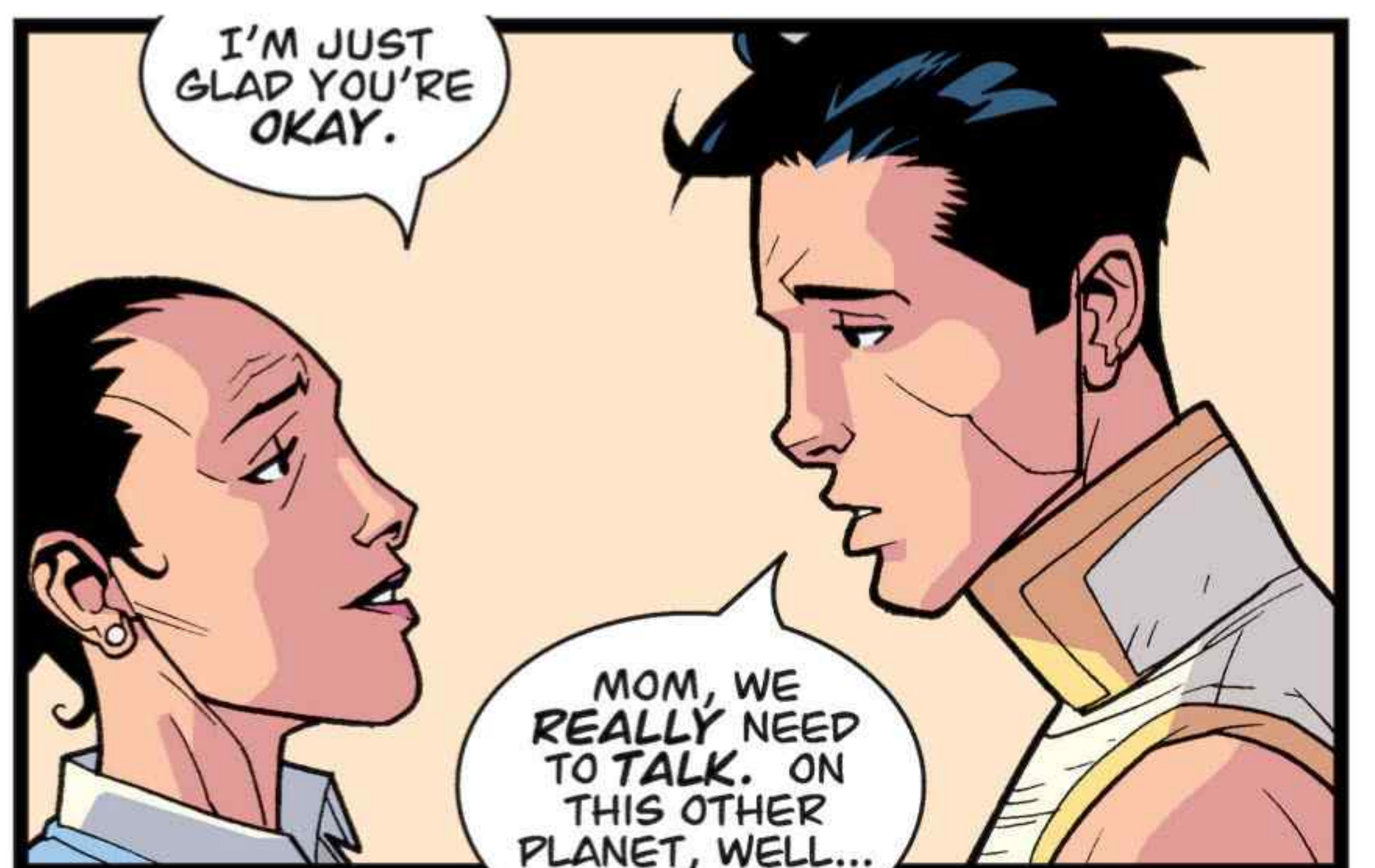
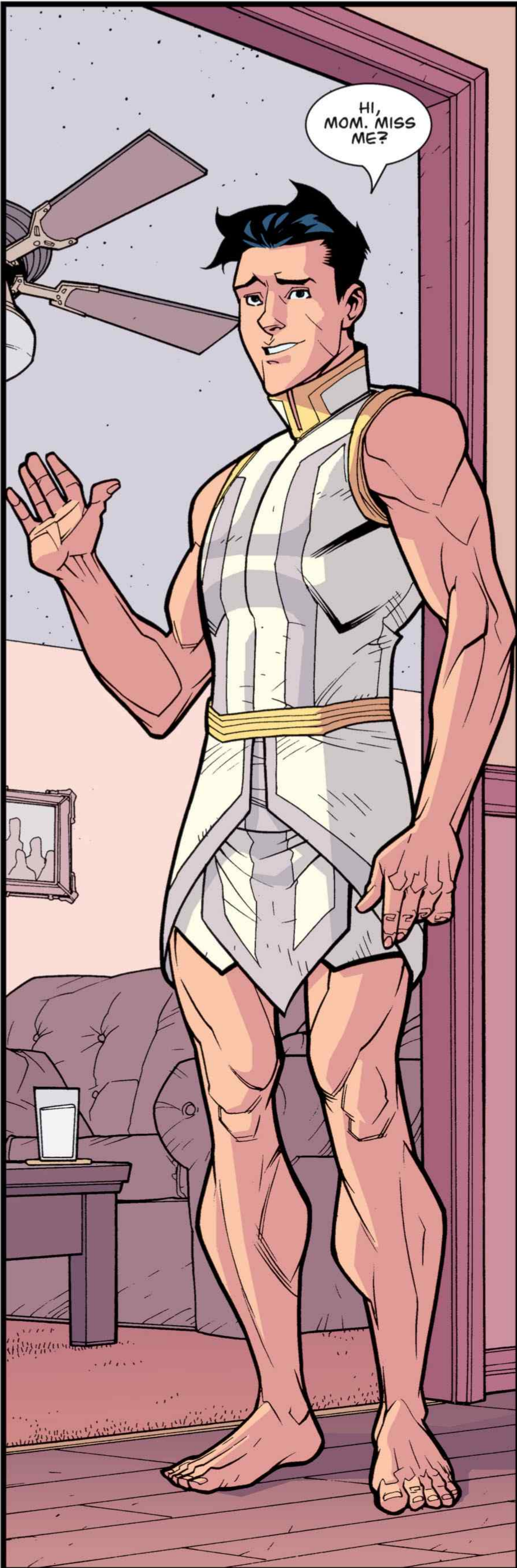
THAT'S GREAT, REALLY. IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE WITH YOUR ABILITIES OUT THERE SMART ENOUGH TO REALIZE THERE'RE PLENTY OF YOU FLYING AROUND PUNCHING THINGS.

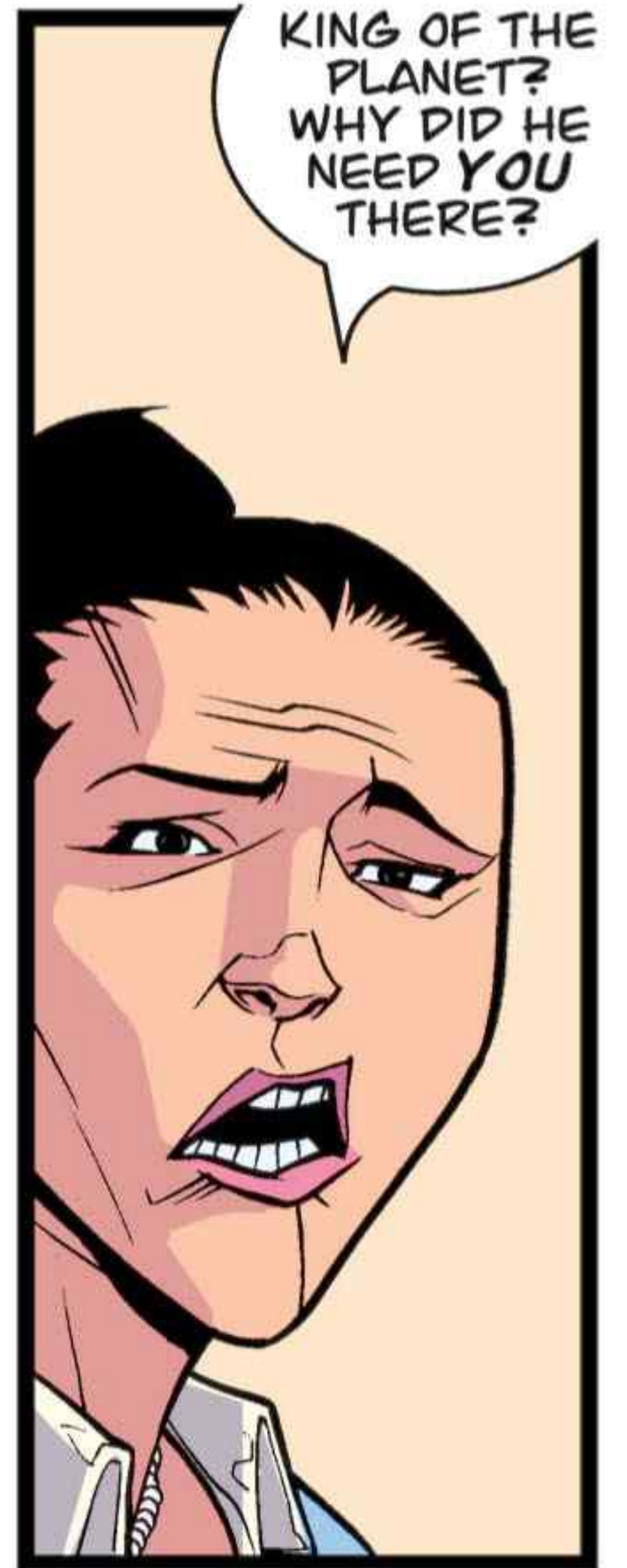


OH, OKAY. I'LL LET YOU GO. IT WAS GOOD TALKING TO YOU.



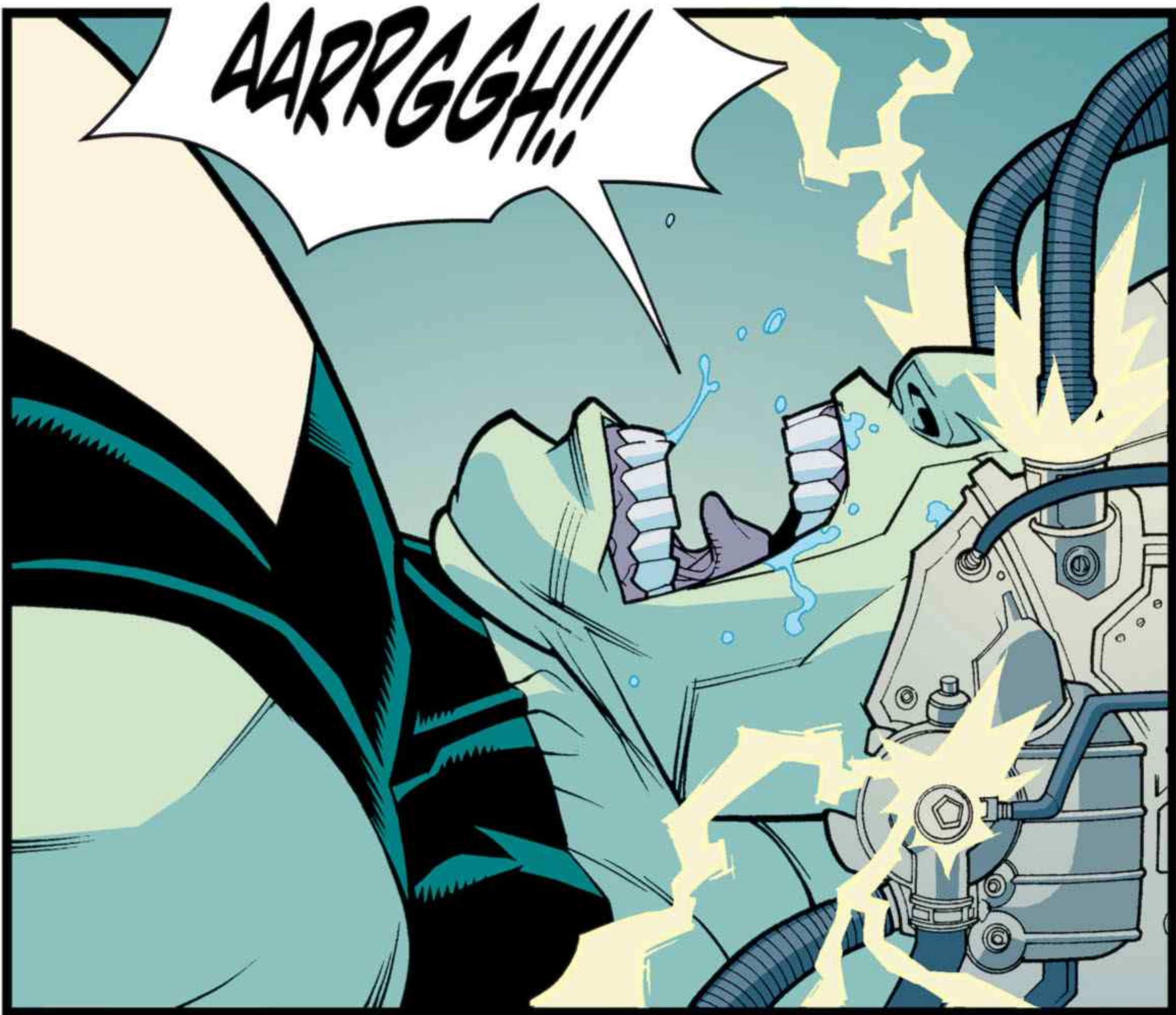
UH...













SO WHILE WE ARE BOTH **CERTAINLY** CLONES OF ONE MAULER--ONE OF US IS A CLONE OF THE **OTHER**. I BELIEVE I'VE DISCOVERED A NEW SOURCE FOR DISPUTE BETWEEN US...



I DO NOT **SEE** IT. IT IS **CLEAR** TO ME THAT YOU ARE THE CLONE AND I AM THE ORIGINAL.



EXACTLY-- AND I FEEL THE **SAME** WAY.



THEN I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD **GET** BACK TO WORK.



YES, LET'S.



SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO-- JUST RETURN BACK TO OUR INITIAL GOAL? AFTER OUR ROBOTS WERE CONFISCATED, THE ATTEMPT TO USE **THE IMMORTAL** TO RECOVER THEM **BACKFIRED**--AND AFTER THAT WE WERE SIDETRACKED BY THE ANGSTROM LEVY JOB.

I SUPPOSE WE COULD JUST PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF WITH THAT OPERATION.

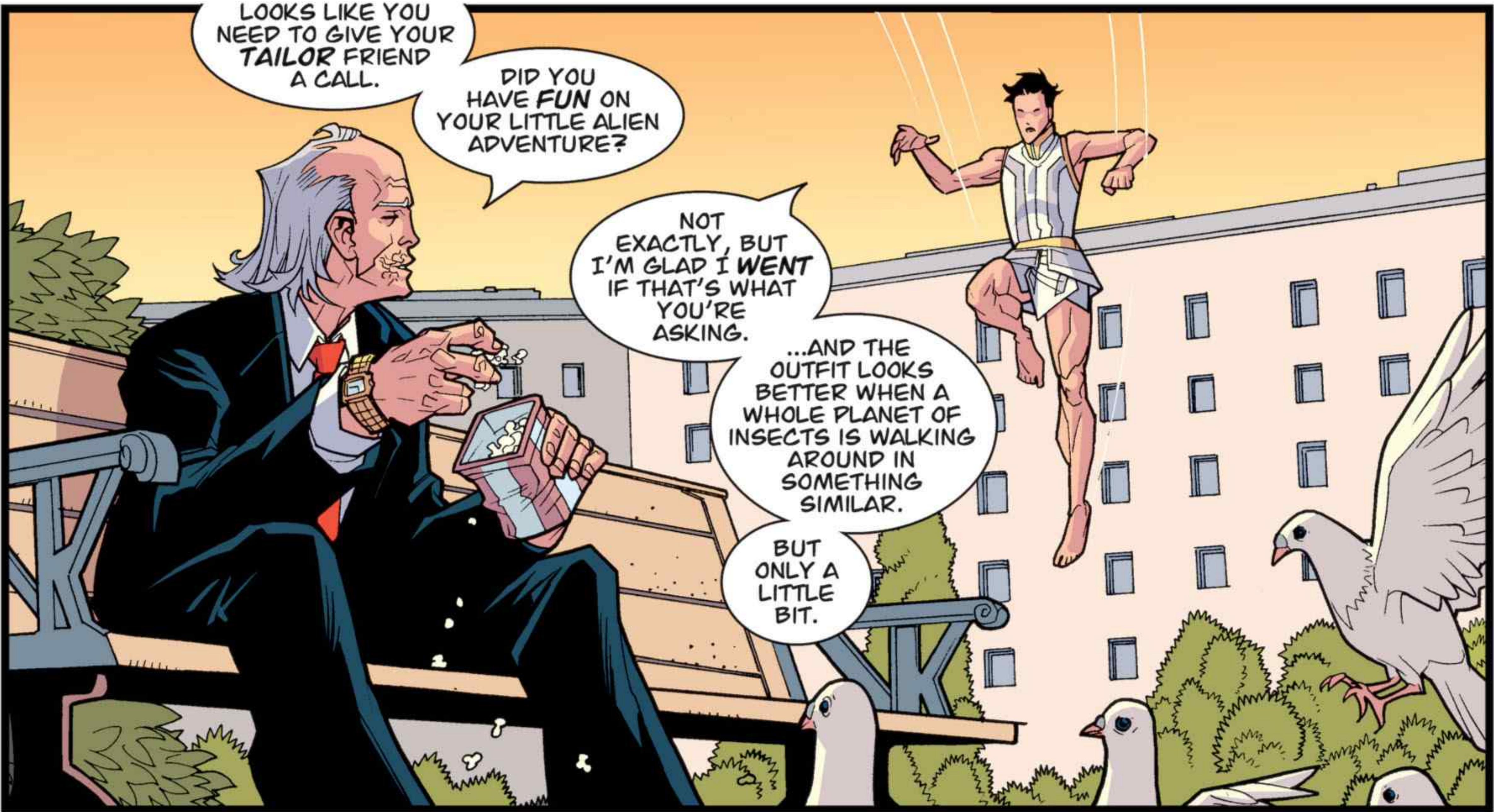
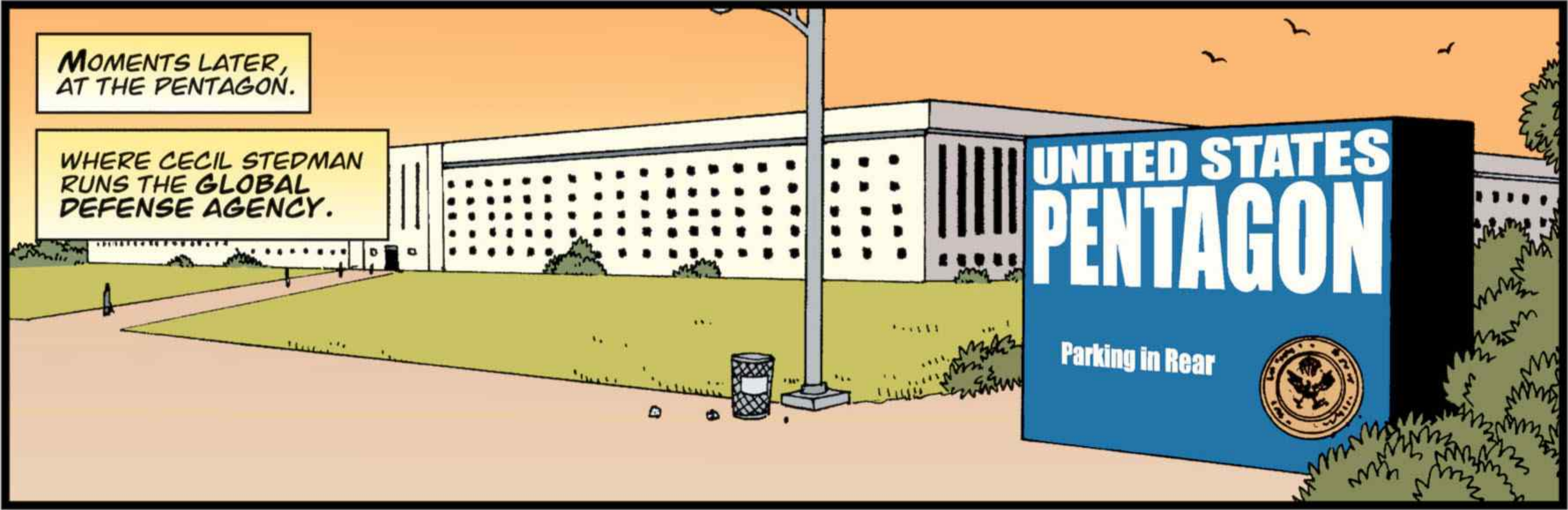
I AGREE, BUT IN ORDER TO DO THAT, WE WOULD NEED TO SECURE FUNDS-- WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE ON A FEW SIDE JOBS BEFORE WE CAN RESUME OUR WORK.



I THINK I **MAY** BE ABLE TO HELP YOU WITH THAT.







WOW.

I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT THAT.

SO... WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

NOTHING. PUT THAT THOUGHT OUT OF YOUR MIND. IF WHAT WE KNOW IS TRUE--IF THEY SENT SO MUCH AS **FOUR** VILTRUMITES TO THIS PLANET THERE WOULDN'T BE A **DAMN** THING WE COULD DO.

SO ALL WE CAN REALLY DO IS WAIT... AND HOPE SOMETHING COMES ALONG THAT ALLOWS US TO FIGHT THEM.

THAT MAKES SENSE.

NOW THAT WE'VE MOVED PAST THAT.

YOUR BROTHER.

YEAH.

LET YOUR MOTHER KNOW THAT WE CAN HELP WITH THAT. HAVING ANOTHER VILTRUMITE RAISED BY **HER** TO BE A FINE UPSTANDING CITIZEN LIKE **YOU** IS IN **ALL** OUR BEST INTERESTS.

WE COULD ARRANGE LEGITIMATE ADOPTION PAPERS AND GIVE THE CHILD BIRTH RECORDS AND EVEN EMPLOY SOME LOW-TECH HOLOGRAPHICS TO MATCH HIS SKIN COLOR.

THE ADVANCED AGING WILL BE TRICKY. WE COULDN'T ALLOW THE CHILD TO ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS BECAUSE SOMEONE WOULD NOTICE HIS... UNIQUENESS... SO WE WOULD PROVIDE A PRIVATE TUTOR.

WE COULD MAKE THIS VERY EASY ON HER. OR WE COULD HELP YOU LOCATE A FOSTER FAMILY... IF SHE DIDN'T WANT THE CHILD.

I'LL LET HER KNOW.

GOOD. NOW I'VE GOT TO REPRIMAND YOU.

I KNOW THIS TURNED OUT FOR THE BEST. SEEING YOUR FATHER, GETTING MORE INFO ON THE VILTRUMITES, YOUR BROTHER... BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO DISOBEY ME AGAIN.

HOLD ON, YOU'RE TELLING ME I WAS **RIGHT** TO GO--BUT THAT I **SHOULDN'T** DO THIS AGAIN?

THAT'S KINDA **SILLY**. DID I EVEN MISS ANYTHING WHEN I WAS GONE THESE LAST TWO MONTHS?

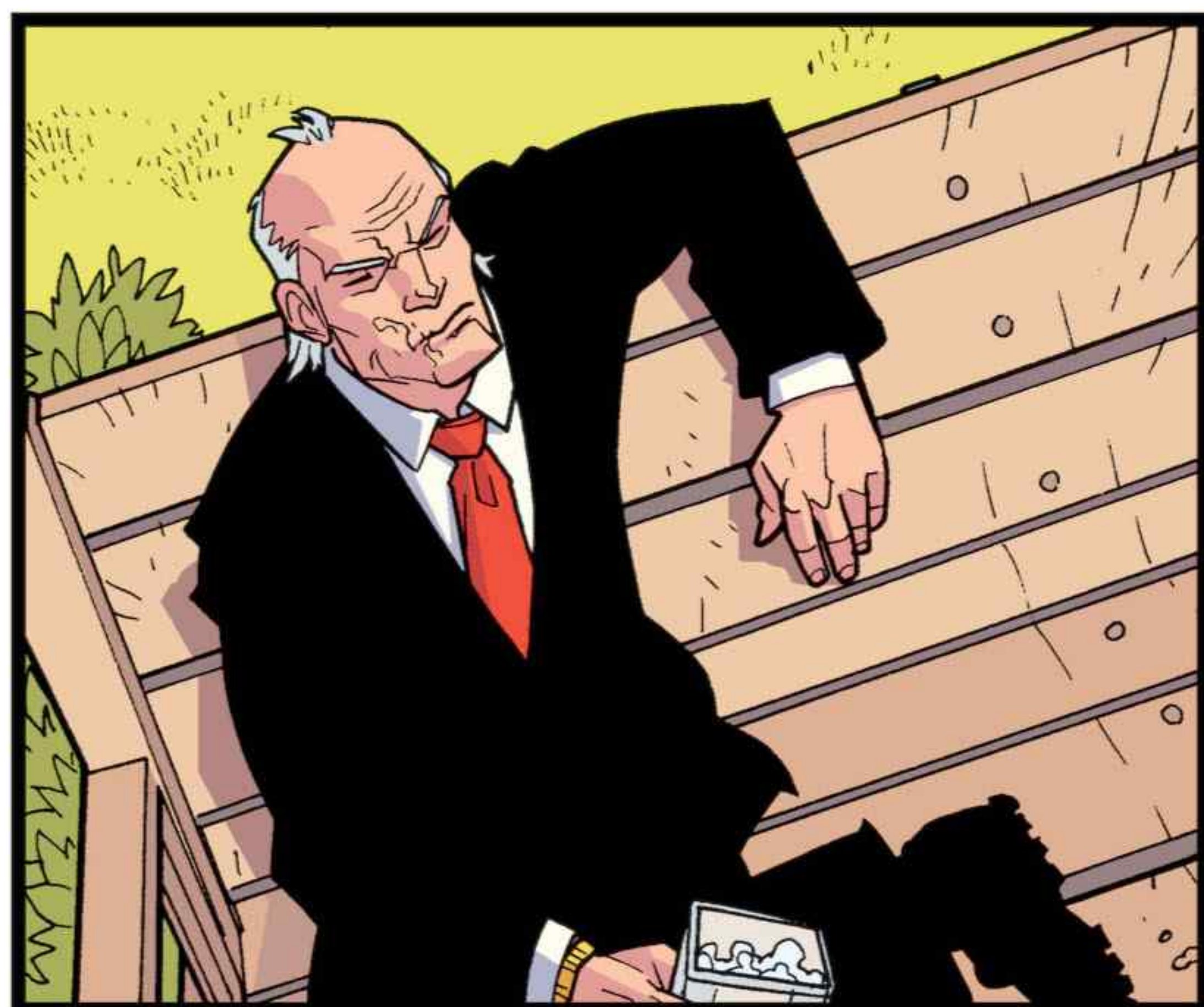
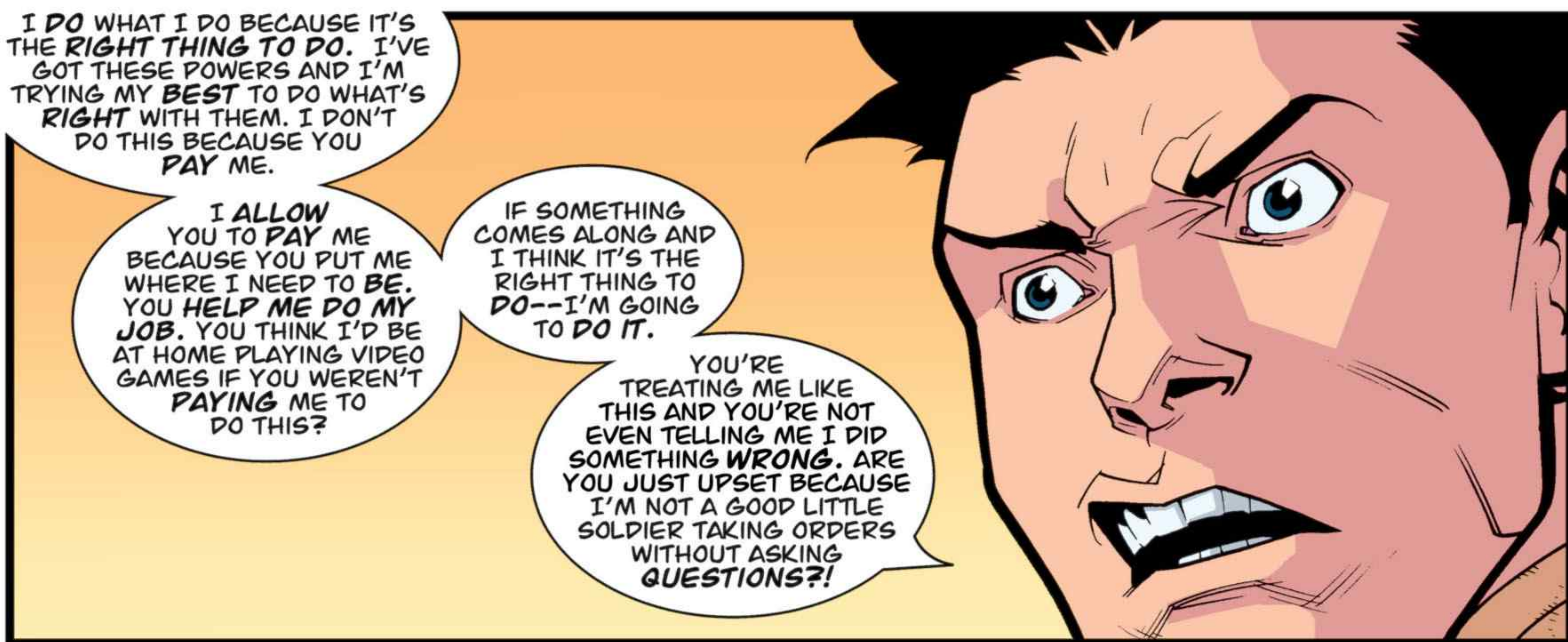
A BEING CALLED **OMNIPOTUS** TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE **WORLD**. I HAD TO AMASS ALMOST THE ENTIRE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY AND EVEN HIRE ON THOSE **CAPIES** BASTARDS FROM NEW YORK TO HELP OUT.

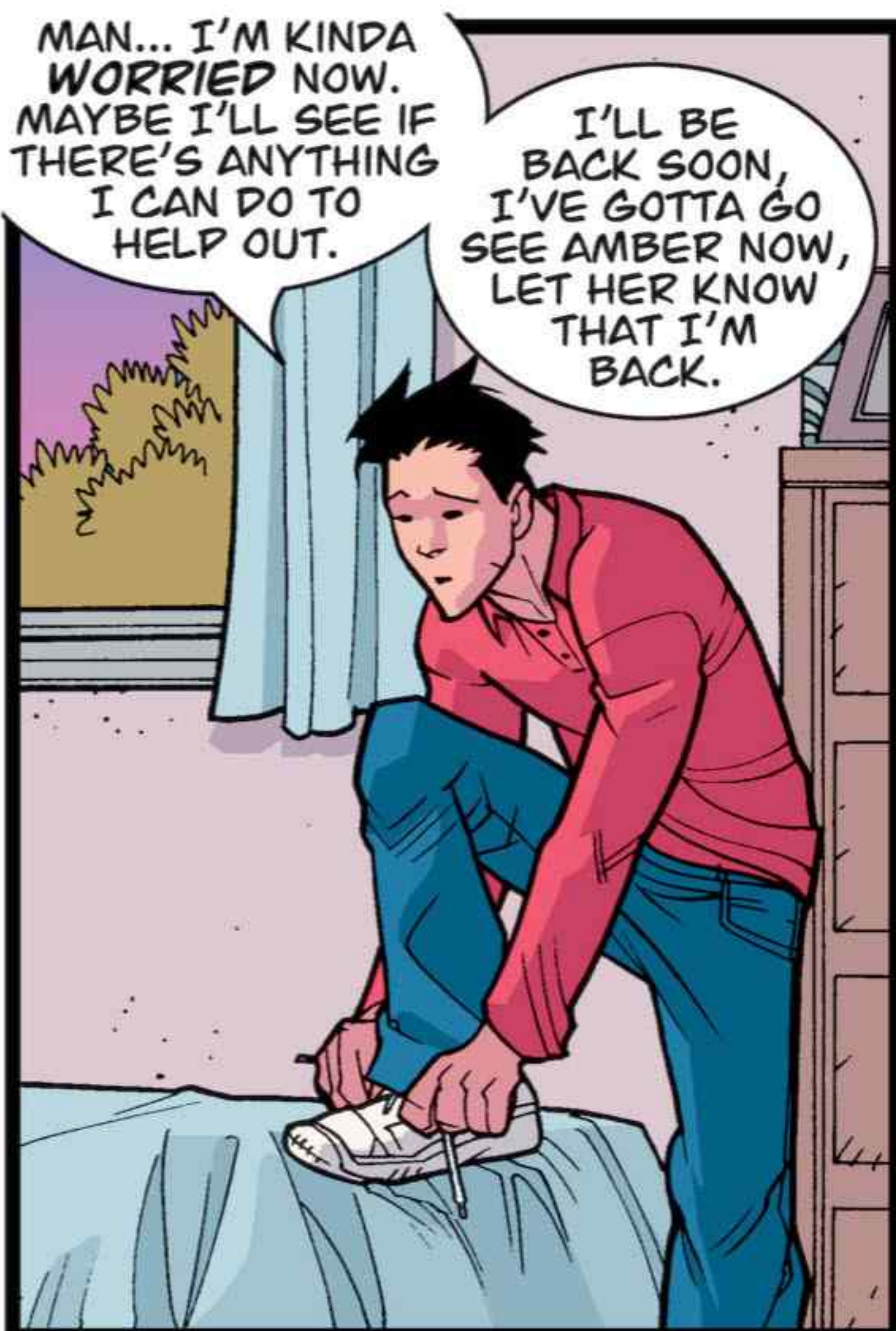
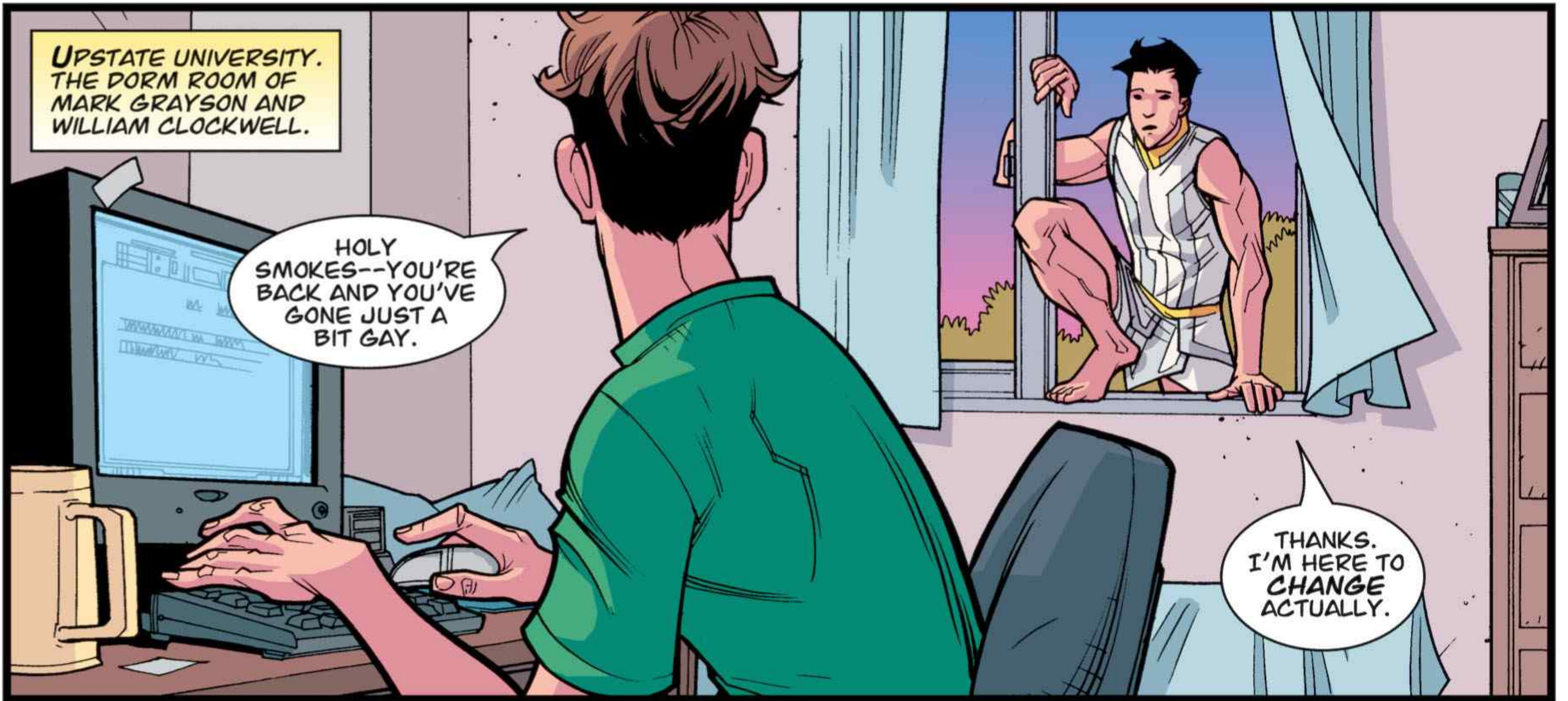
WE ALMOST DIDN'T WIN THAT ONE.

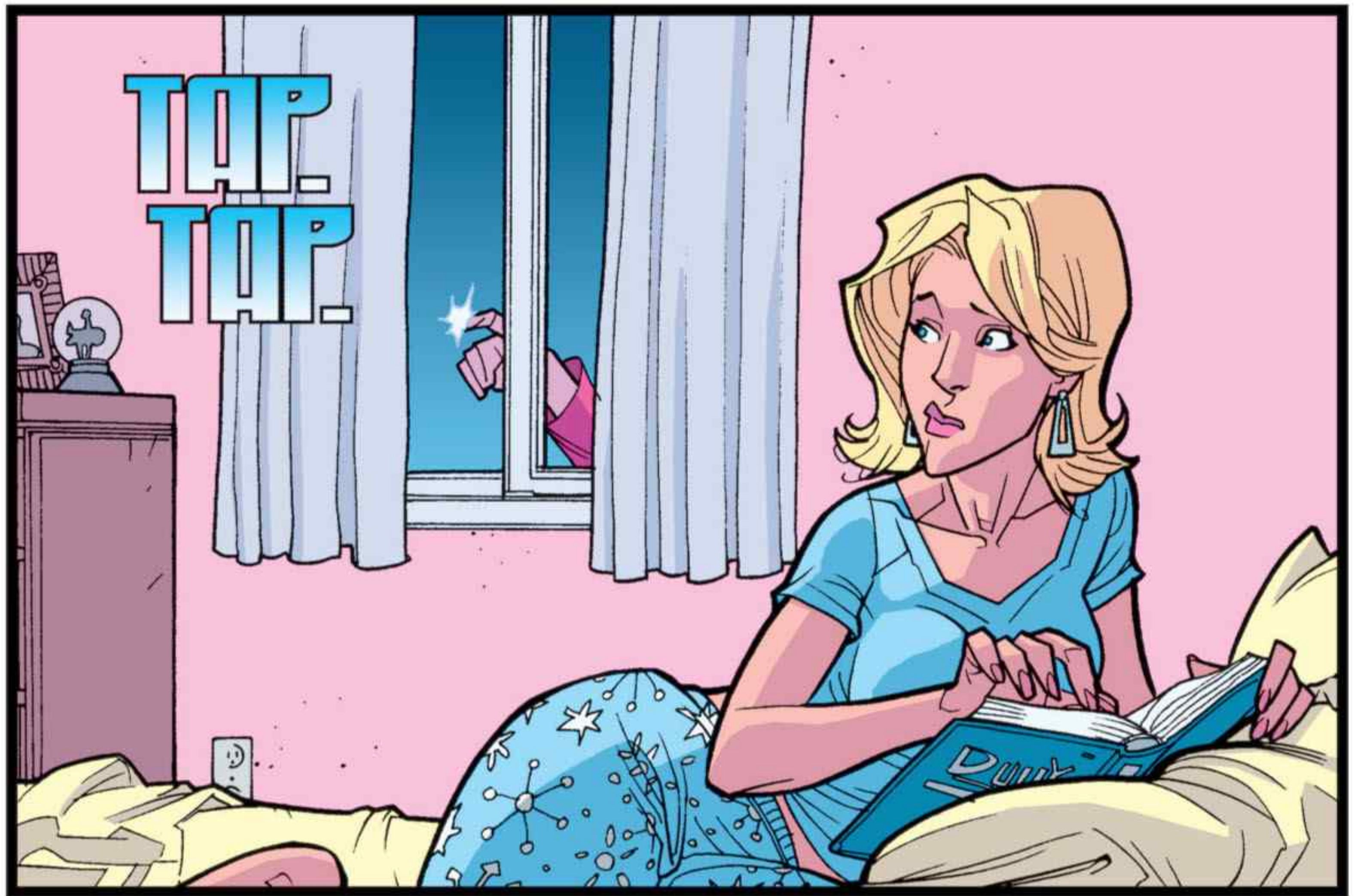
BUT YOU DID.

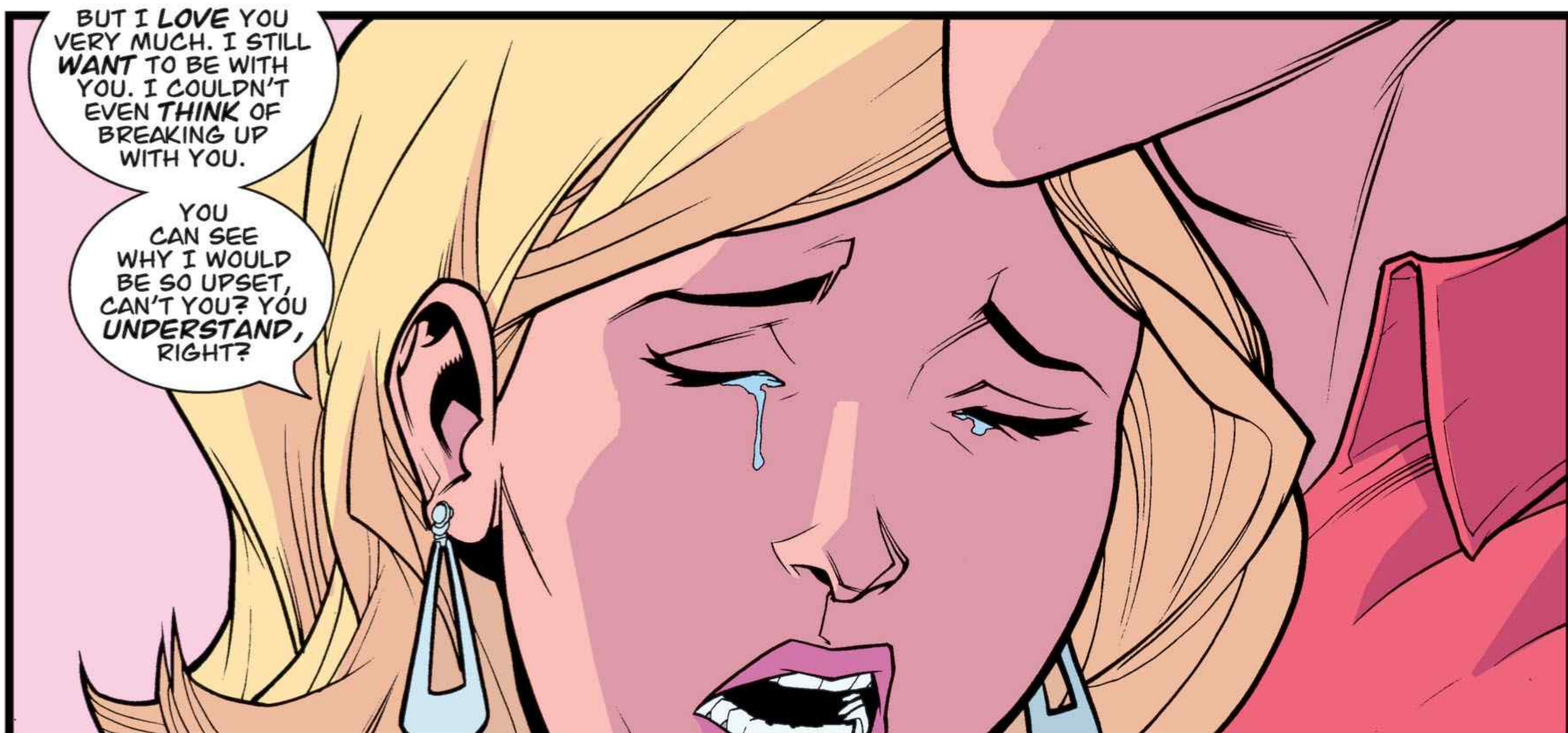
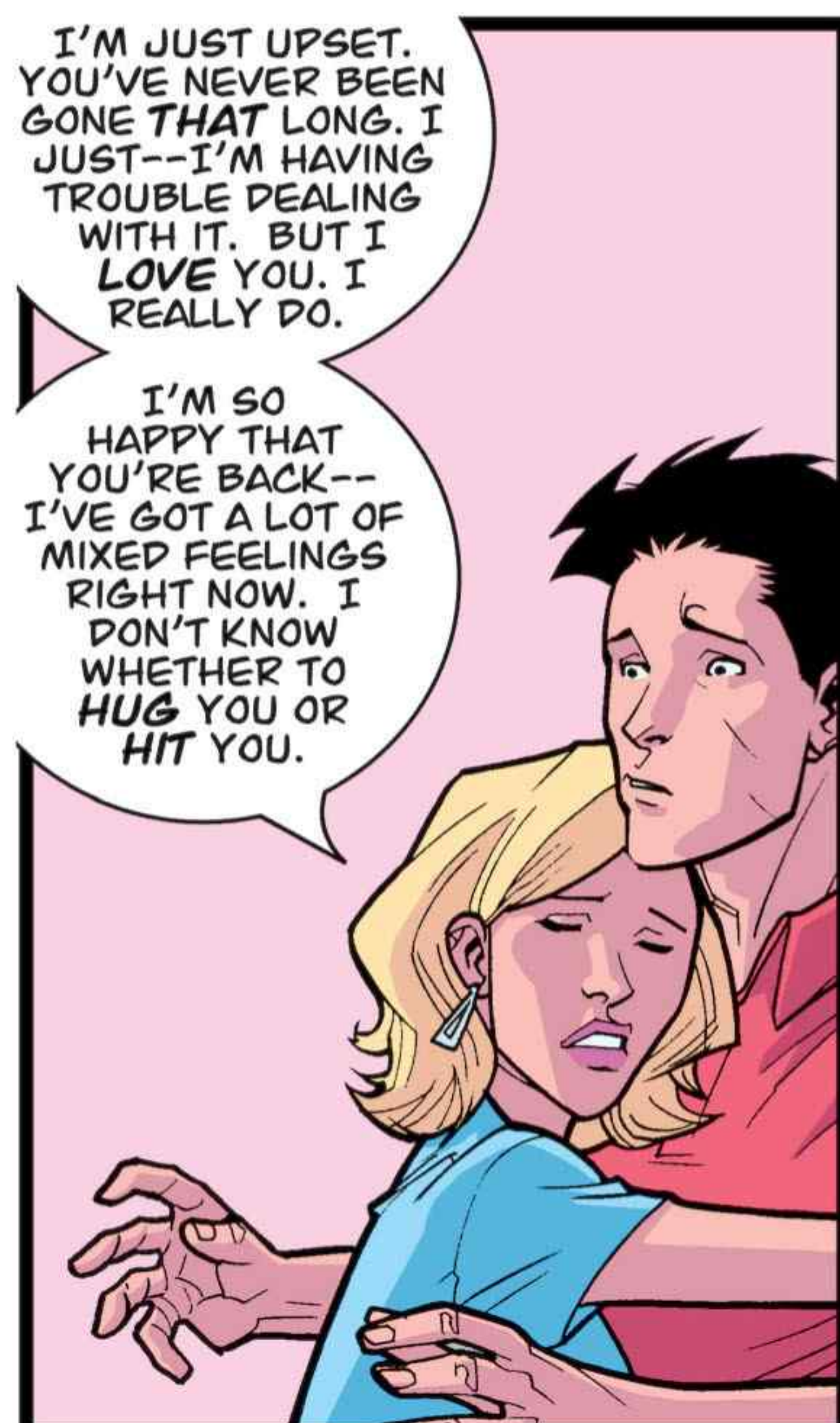
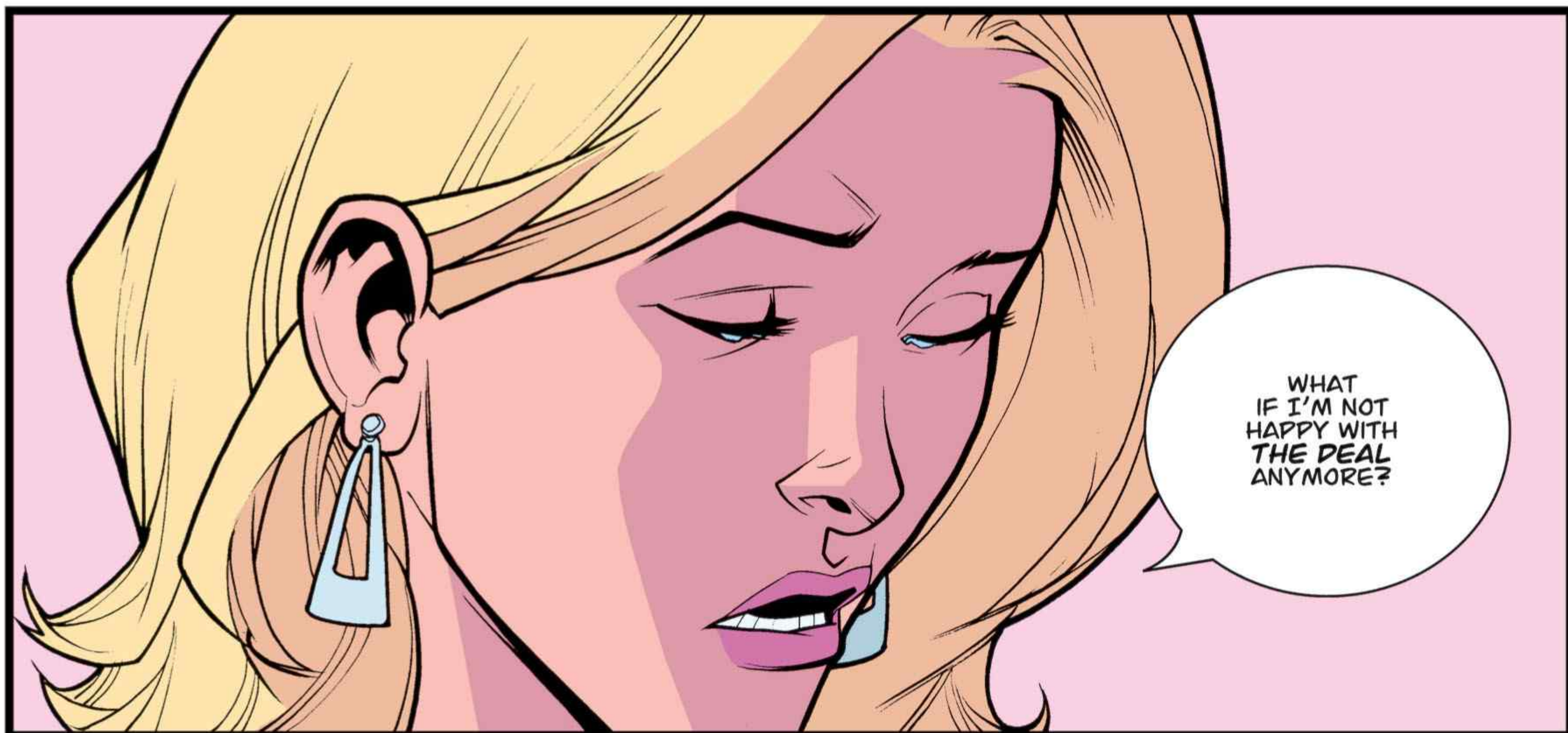
THAT'S NOT THE **POINT**, MARK. THE POINT IS YOU WERE **NEEDED**.

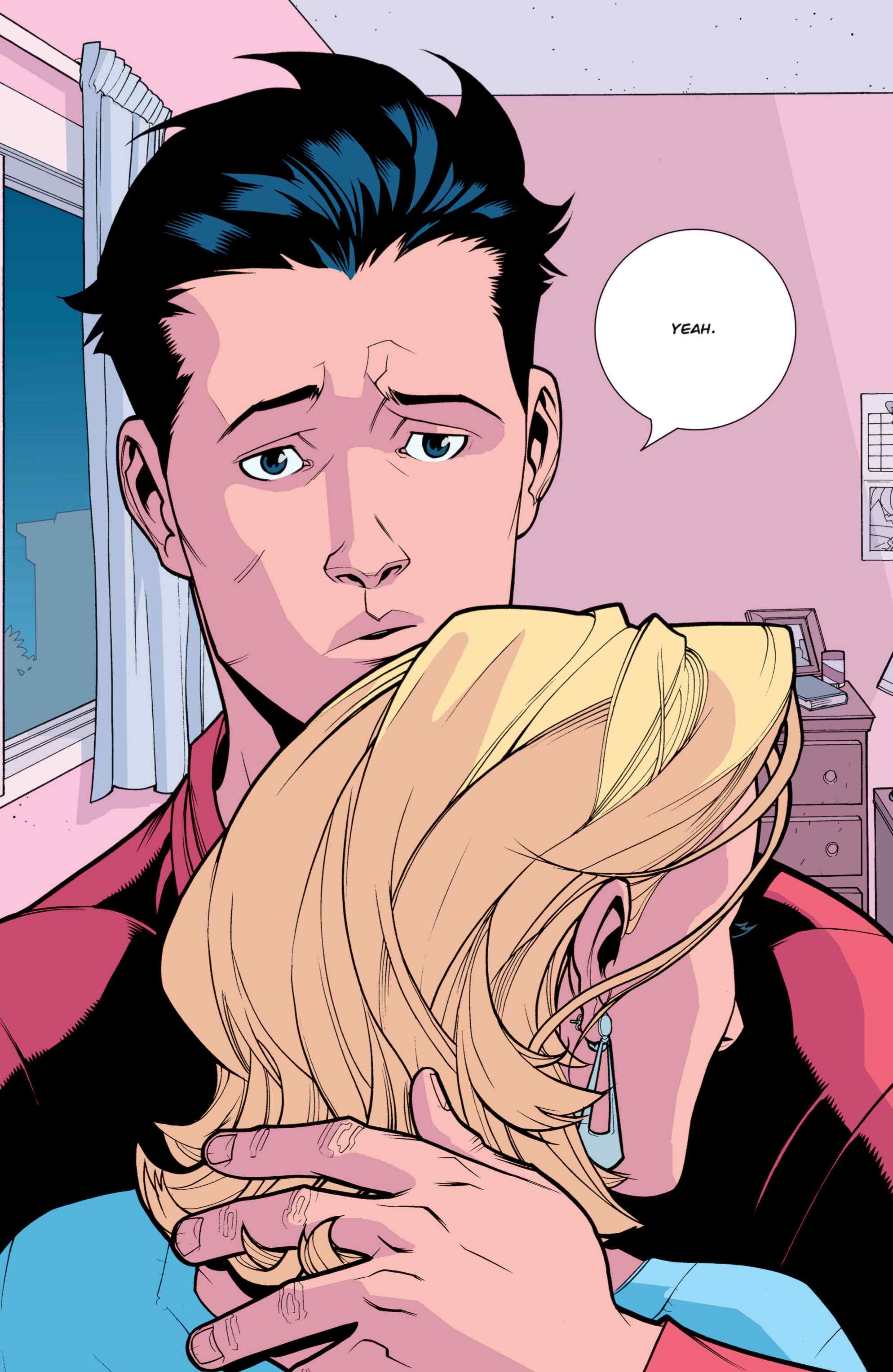
ACTUALLY, I THINK THE POINT IS THAT AN **ALIEN WORLD** WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY DESTROYED IF I HAD STAYED HERE--AND WHILE I WAS GONE--YOU GUYS SAVED **THIS PLANET** WITHOUT ME.











YEAH.